



## Consumer Education Website Continuous Improvement Series

### Child Care Search Suite

#### TIP SHEET

# Data Governance Makes It Possible

The Consumer Education Website Continuous Improvement Series aims to help Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies develop effective, family-friendly consumer education websites. This series is designed to support the efforts of jurisdictions as they enhance their consumer education websites to help families better understand the full range of child care options and resources available to them.

The Child Care Search Suite includes resources for CCDF Lead Agencies to consider as they enhance their child care search tools so that families can easily access useful, accurate, and understandable information to help them choose care that meets their needs.

### How Can This Tip Sheet Help Us?



To add data-driven enhancements to your consumer education website, such as an enhanced child care search tool or a data dashboard, you need data. The data are likely to come from many sources, often outside of your organization. Oftentimes, to access the data you need to support these features, you must collaborate with state partners. Data governance makes this possible.

## What Is Data Governance?

Many find the term “data governance” to be a little daunting—but the concept itself is not. Data governance is simply the means by which organizations or groups of organizations share data and make decisions about those shared data.

Data governance works as both an organizational structure and process.

- **Structure:** Data governance brings data partners together in a formal, sustained way. For example, data governance provides the structure to bring data partners from child care, public school prekindergarten, summer camps, and statewide child care resource and referral agencies together to discuss, coordinate, and align efforts to support data enhancements to your jurisdiction’s child care search tool.
- **Process:** Through the creation and enforcement of policies, roles, responsibilities, and procedures, a data governance agreement establishes responsibility for shared data and allows agency staff and data partners to collaboratively and continuously improve data quality.<sup>1</sup> For example, you and your data partners could discuss which new data elements to include in an enhanced child care search tool and how to access or collect these data. As a data governance body, you and your partners could also discuss how to improve data collection methods to ensure the most accurate and reliable data are used to enhance your child care search.

<sup>1</sup>DaSy, The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems. (2014). DaSy framework: Data governance and management. <https://dasycenter.org/resources/dasy-framework/data-management/>



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## Why Is It Important?

When creating a new system or product that requires data collaboration with other organizations, you must set clear roles, responsibilities, and processes to start, guide, and maintain the work. Data governance is the mechanism by which you do this. It ensures that data-driven consumer education website enhancements can be not only developed but continuously and sustainably maintained.

Data governance is essential to successfully planning, developing, and maintaining a data tool in which several partners contribute data (such as a data dashboard or child care search tool) because it ensures that those who use and contribute the data communicate and collaborate in an ongoing manner. Its structure and process ensure that all data partners participate in the decision-making process at both the strategic and implementation levels to support data use and quality.

## How Does This Relate to Data Integration?

Data integration is simply the process by which you bring disconnected datasets together in one place. Data governance facilitates cross-agency data sharing, bringing together otherwise disconnected and siloed datasets.

Data sharing can support enhancements to your consumer education website—such as an enhanced child care search tool or a data dashboard that presents key child care metrics. Once you have established a formal data governance process for maintaining and sharing data, your team will need to determine how to actually combine—or integrate—data from different sources in a way that gives users a cohesive view of the data. This just means that users will interface with data elements seamlessly without knowing they come from different sources.

Sharing and integrating data from multiple sources to support a shared product requires ongoing coordination about how data will be defined, matched, stored, updated, reported, and protected. A solid data governance plan allows these decisions to be made consistently, with input and buy-in from all partners.

## Where Do I Start?

Getting a data governance process up and running does not need to be arduous or overwhelming. Here are some helpful tips to get you started.

- Most jurisdictions already have some basic data governance structures and policies. Ask your information technology department, legal department, or jurisdiction's Chief Information Officer. Make sure you align your work around consumer education data with these established policies.
- If your jurisdiction does not already have formal data governance structures and policies in place, consult with experts such as business analysts, information technology staff or consultants, or data leads about how you can incorporate recommended best practices into your data governance efforts.

### How Can Data Governance Help?

It makes sustained data sharing possible in the following ways:

- Improving communication, collaboration, and relationships among partner agencies
- Creating a shared vision for strategic and more effective data use
- Aligning policy and research questions with agency or state priorities and initiatives
- Improving data quality and protecting data privacy
- Developing well-defined, documented data policies and priorities
- Coordinating among partner agencies on data integration and use
- Improving understanding of data collected, reported, and used

Source: Institute of Education Sciences. (n.d.). Data governance toolkit. Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program. <https://slds.grads360.org/#program/data-governance-overview>



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- Recognize the importance of supporting data documentation in data governance work. Data governance policies should require that supporting documentation be available to ensure interoperability (processes that allow different software to share and transfer data) when transferring state data to other programs or agencies. Supporting documentation may include data dictionaries or data validation checks.
- To be successful and nourish collaboration, data governance should be an ongoing, sustained process. For example, have your data committee meet quarterly to discuss updates, how sharing processes are going, what challenges you are facing or anticipating, emerging needs, and coordinating efforts toward shared goals.

## Data Governance Tips

Use the following tips to guide your planning and help support efficient and effective data governance efforts.

- Leverage experts to shepherd the work.
- Learn about your state processes and requirements for data sharing agreements.
- Reach out to other states who have created successful data governance structures.
- Focus on the most compelling data needs first.
- Consider how to adapt the current process to first support work on the consumer education website and then support broader work.
- Prepare to move forward incrementally when implementing your vision, using data that is required and easily accessible at first and expanding the data available from other sources over time (see Tip Sheet: How to Implement Child Care Search Tool Enhancements for best practices).
- Start small and then expand.
  - Consider shoring up your data governance process to first support work on the consumer education website.
  - Refine and strengthen your process based on lessons learned.
  - Then consider pursuing broader, more extensive data sharing initiatives.

## Pulling Shared Data Together: Tips

Data governance facilitates cross-agency data sharing, bringing together otherwise disconnected and siloed datasets. Here are some tips that can maximize your data sharing efforts.

- Develop a data dictionary that establishes a common set of definitions for required data as well as priorities for implementation.
- Use a common primary key to facilitate data merging and alignment.
- Consider an incremental approach to data integration. You can approach the incremental integration as a pilot phase, learn from any challenges or policy barriers that arise, and apply that knowledge when scaling up to integrate other data.
- Incremental integration allows you to achieve small wins and demonstrate success on data integration.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Early Childhood Data Collaborative. (n.d.). One step at a time: The benefits of an incremental approach to the integration of home visiting and other early childhood data. [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Shine-brief-1\\_ChildTrends\\_Oct2019.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Shine-brief-1_ChildTrends_Oct2019.pdf)



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## Resources

### SCBC Child Care Suite Resources

- [Best Practice Brief: Online Child Care Search Tools](#)
- [Child Care Search Tool Assessment Checklist](#)
- [Best Practice Brief: Data Collection Considerations to Support an Enhanced Child Care Search](#)
- [Tip Sheet: How to Implement Child Care Search Tool Enhancements](#)

### Data Governance Resources

- Berkeley Library. (2019). GIS (geographic information systems): Geocoding. University of California. <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/gis/geocoding>
- Data Quality Campaign. (2018). Roadmap for cross-agency data governance: Key focus areas to ensure quality implementation [Guide]. <https://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/roadmap-cross-agency-data-governance/>
- Early Childhood Data Collaborative. (2018). Improving the lives of young children through data: Lessons learned from three early care and education data integration projects. [https://www.ecedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ECDC\\_KIDSCOUNT\\_ECIDS\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ecedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ECDC_KIDSCOUNT_ECIDS_Report.pdf)
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- Institute of Education Sciences. (n.d.). Data governance toolkit. Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program. <https://slds.grads360.org/#program/data-governance-overview>
- Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. (2013). INQUIRE data toolkit. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/inquire-data-toolkit>
- Privacy Technical Assistance Center. (2015). Data governance and stewardship. U.S. Department of Education. [https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource\\_document/file/Data\\_Governance\\_and\\_Stewardship\\_0.pdf](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/Data_Governance_and_Stewardship_0.pdf)
- Privacy Technical Assistance Center. (2015). Data governance checklist. U.S. Department of Education. [https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource\\_document/file/Data%20Governance%20Checklist\\_0.pdf](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/Data%20Governance%20Checklist_0.pdf)



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## Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about whether your planned website enhancements meet CCDF requirements, please consult with your [Office of Child Care regional office](#) for guidance.

If you would like technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, including your child care search, contact the Child Care State Capacity Building Center ([CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info](mailto:CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info)).

*The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.*

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